

ROLLING EGG

notes from the Providence Fringe Festival 2018 // daily // free
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"FIVE CRATES OF RATS"

regarding architecture, theatre, chairs I sat in, stuff I heard

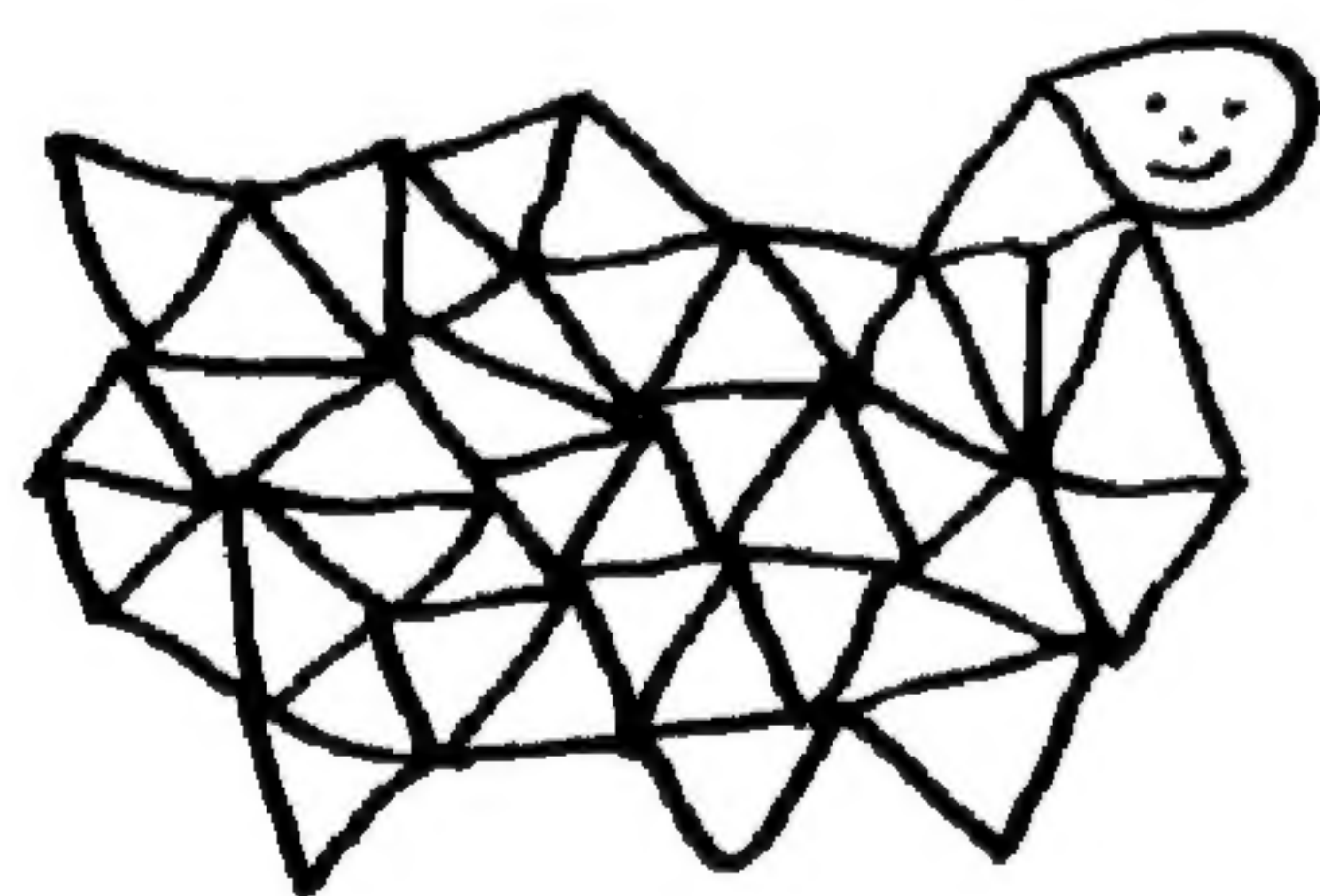
Curtain style room 1: no stage curtain but there were billowing curtains from floor to ceiling on the side wall, it was almost like we were all on stage sitting sideways, watching the show, which was offstage. What if the curtain opened and there was a huge opera crowd sitting there looking at us? No doubt about it, I'd run.

Ceilings in this room were shiny ductwork, and above the ducts the ceiling had been treated with some sort of sprayed-on goo painted heather grey, kind of looked like a years and years worth of dryer lint. Great contrast with the shiny duct work. Sound insulation? Good look.

Some guy outside was taking pictures of the building so I moved benches to the one behind the coffee guy, then I had a really nice time in between acts talking with two theatre fans and playwrights. We talked about the thrill of looking out over an audience from behind the curtain, accessing and transmitting joy, and making peach pie. It can be tough to get the crust right but there's a small number of tricks involved (keep it cold) and once you get a crust recipe you like, it's yours, and the more you make it the less of a production it is to make pies, tarts, and quiches. It was a nice evening just before sun set, classic mackerel sky.

Curtain style room 2: not a curtain to be seen but the lights went down and the music came up, does that count?

Act starts with saying how long the act is, which I appreciate.

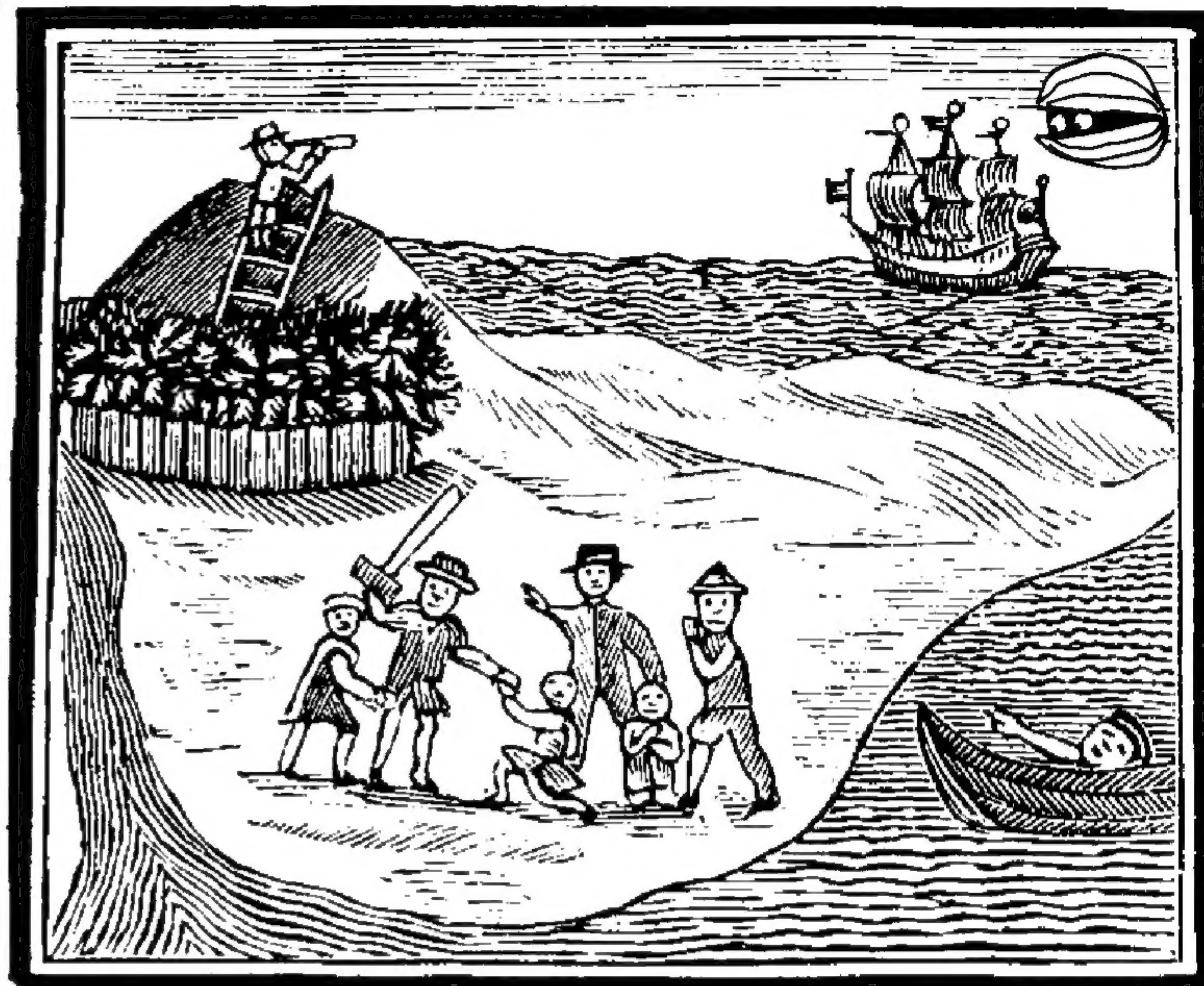


Love these audience chairs- plastic with good support, in Klien blue, a strong, deeper-than-royal blue, with some texture. Kandinsky says that the color blue is the spiritual color, because your eye tricks you into thinking it's farther away (due to a special human interest in redness, via fresh fruit and emotional faces and other red things). I don't want to think of a chair as "far away" but "I'm seated at a slight remove" is good for the circumstance. The chairs are not foldable but they seem stackable. I wonder if they ever just stack them as high as they go in that room with the huge celings. I absolutely would, once. I absolutely would and then absolutely would throw a basketball at the stack from far away.

Packed house, standing room only, sound is on the side, not a great location but it puts the sound people "on the stage", or at least Not Behind The Scenes, which is nice.

I bet having a play-writing group is really satisfying- short plays, a shared set of actors, great dynamic. More like a band. Everyone loads in their own backdrops. What Mike Watt calls "jamming econo". Short plays are very respectful of everyone's time (actors and audience) and I like how they have to just get right to the key moment, hang there for a sec, then bounce. No need to get all tangled up! Although I enjoy getting tangled up too now and then.

Artists get in free but I'm not seeing a lot of lanyards in the crowd.... It's the first day though, probably everyone in a play that isn't on right now is losing their minds. First night is a great slot though- just get right into it!



I was excited to see this Catholic show because when I asked Matthew if there were any trends this year he said that there were a few dark Catholic riffs (and that goofball magicians, prevalent in years past, were absent). Is dark Catholic an especially New England vibe or especially keyed to the theatre (via pageantry and confession)? or both? Anyway I tried on the first day but it had been cancelled, might try a different showing. The room it was supposed to be in was really big like a gymnasium, I was looking forward to hearing an amplified voice bouncing around in it. Huge ceiling fans moved slowly and noiselessly very far overhead. Some other time.

I'm dressed perfectly in long pants and a breezy long sleeve shirt. It's a nice night outside then it's chilly when you get in the space but then they turn off the AC just before the show- mild ups and downs seem very appropriate.

This first act in the group show is about getting an arts grant from a personal foundation and it is bleak! I love it. This uptight museum foundation lady's name is perfect but I'm not going to say it in case it's someone's real name. I picture the process of naming a character as either an immediate breeze or a langorous unsettling doldrum, no inbetween. Worth noting when they nail it. Especially in a short play, when most of the time you probably don't even need to give people names.

CORNBREAD \$2

Second act has a great Scrabble variant which I will detail here: you will need a standard Scrabble set and a pile of pennies. All the vowel tiles are removed from the box. Players collect their opening seven tiles from those remaining. If you need a vowel, you use a penny, which functions like a blank tile for vowels only. Each player is allowed unencumbered access to the penny pile. In this way the game play moves faster, more appropriate to a short-form dramatic setting. Also one of the major frustrations of Scrabble (a hand with not enough or too many vowels) is mitigated. Did they invent this for the play? It's great. Kudos to playwright Kay Ellen Bullard. Please note that I enjoyed the entire production, I wasn't thinking about the Scrabble thing the whole time. that's a real danger in introducing a novel concept but in this case it just flowed around me like notable smoke.

"THAT'S NOT A BOOK"

3rd act has a bunch of prop beers lying around, but you know they're empty and people are pretending they aren't. But also, you know that someone here had to drink all those beers beforehand. Besides the beers, everyone who eats food in this set of plays really eats, I really respect that. I wonder if that's in the charter of the playwriting group? "All Food Is Real Food (drinks may be time-shifted)". Or maybe just "Someone's Gotta Eat This Food".

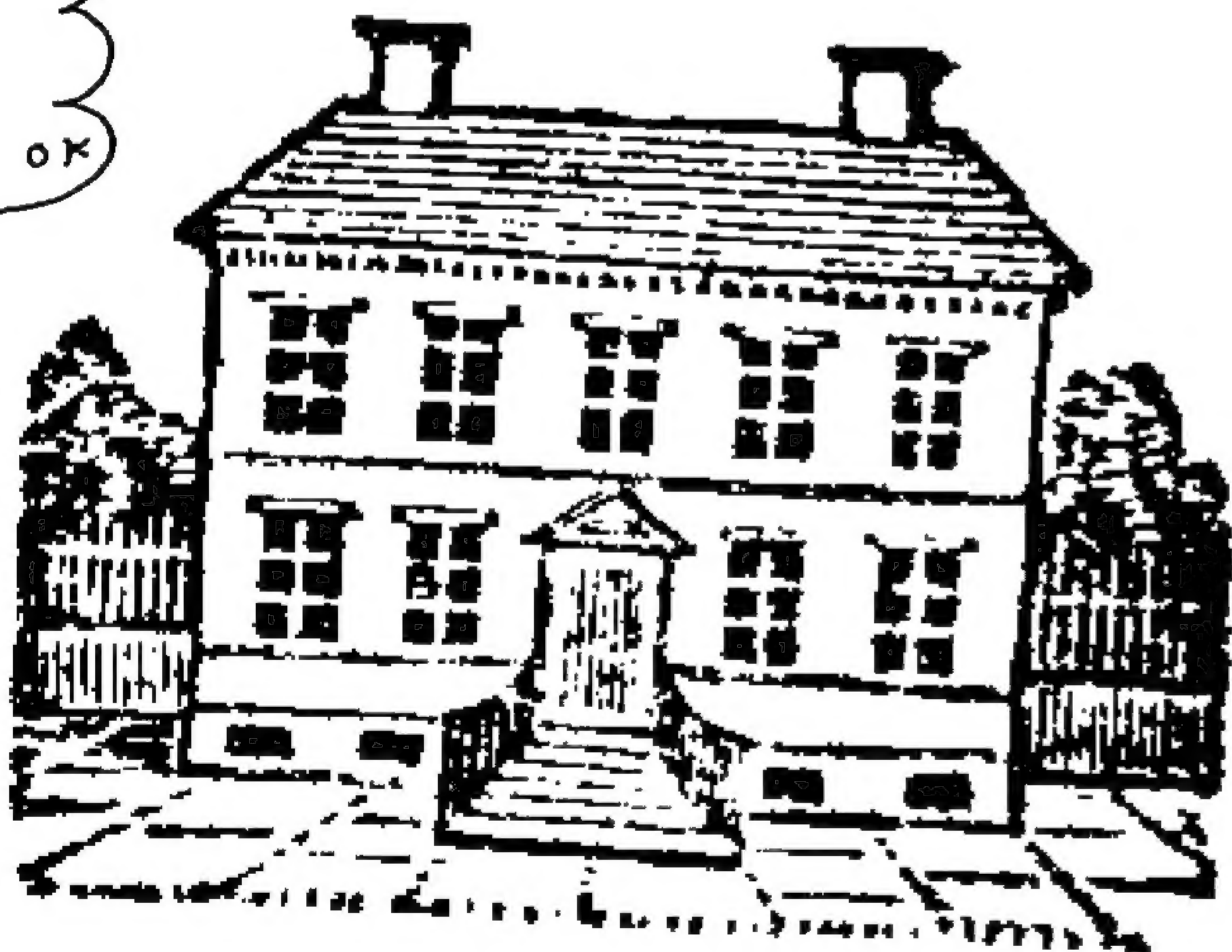
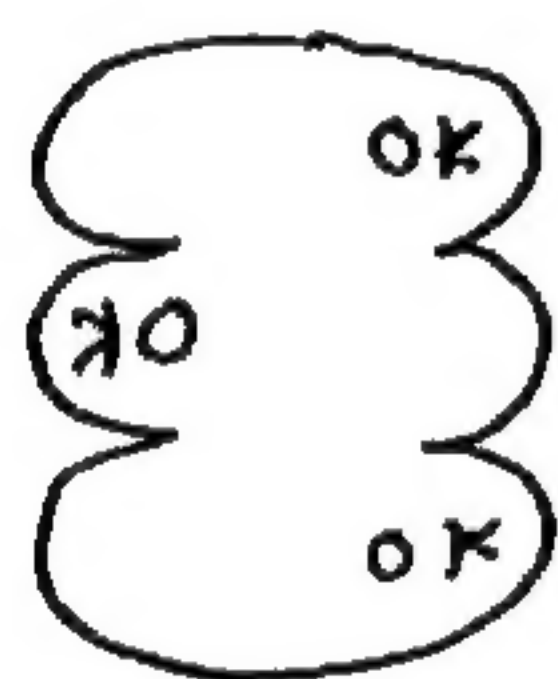
Some people can't mug very well, or they think they can but then they go for it and they're just moving their face around needlessly. This guy can really mug. Moreover he knows when to hold back and when to put his cards on the table, what a blessing. His best line was "Oh my goodness!". Picture a mug that can really sell that line! Beautiful. It's a good thing there aren't a lot of other actors in the crowd tonight because I don't want to see other acts in the fest get inspired and try and compete with this guy's surprised and joyous face. You might as well try and compete with the night for mystery- it's not going to happen.

I saw the muggy guy outside and told him he was great. I know you can't say "good luck" before a play, but after the play you say what you feel right? That's what I'll do until told otherwise.

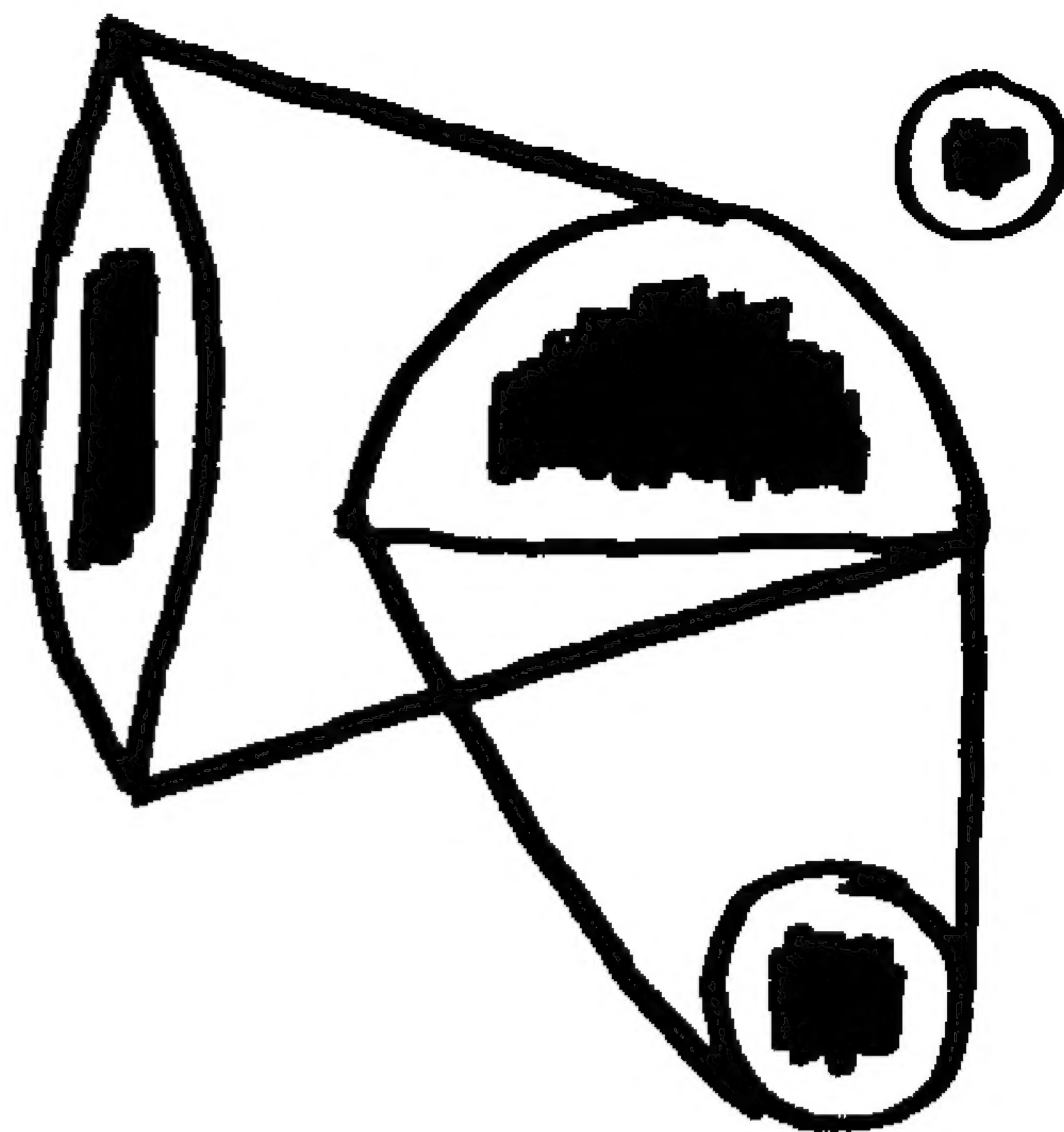
I got the beer with a rainbow on it, it was great. No complaints.

Bathrooms here are very nice and easily found. The wall tile is a very dramatic color, not gonna say which color though, just gotta see for yourself. OK I'll say it, it's a very gristley red.

I got corn bread from the bbq food truck and it was really good. The guy gave me a really big piece and then the other guy said "nice". Or maybe the piece was regular size and the guy just said "nice" because it was nice. \$2.



Sometimes a show sort of alters your mind in a funny way, or gets you accustomed to a certain mode of behavior- after a noise show sometimes I find myself walking home listening to electrical hums, and after the sci fi movie marathon i'm shocked by how few things in my life levitate or glow. After a night at the theatre I found myself amazed at how many things there were in the scene- cars, people, rats, trash, buildings, all with little or no impact on the narrative. No judgement. I walked by a long row of unsold loft apartments and peeked in the windows, it was the same table, same chair, same bowl, over and over again, and I thought "someone's gonna sit at each one of those and have the beginning, middle, and end of an emotion."



Each performance starts with someone on staff reading the same spiel about sponsors and awards and welcome and so forth. It's nice to hear everyone's different styles- everyone gets some time in the lights, trying out their stage voice.

This one has a gore warning and the late night crowd just notched up their mood. There's also a poetry guy inbetween each act, he has a kind of Jonathan Richman voice but he's half Rod Serling half psychedelic caterpillar. He's killing it.

The guy playing the politics guy is great, great voice. It's fun to imagine theatre people busting out some of their lines at a party-- this crew especially has great runs of dialogue that would be really fun to just drop on the room when you see your buddy from the play out and about. The urge to do this must be enormous! Like you get behind them in line at Dunkies or whatever and whisper "5 crates of rats" or some other choice bit of the dozens of bits you committed to memory. Do you guys do this? I would.

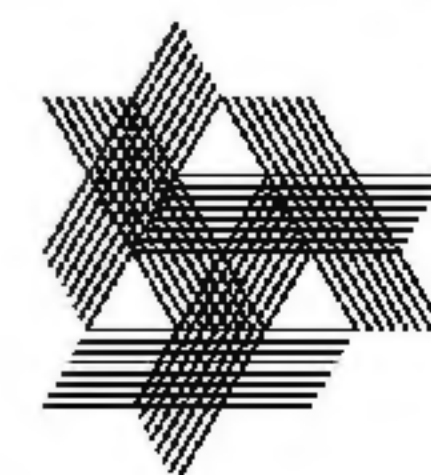
There's some fake blood in this one and it gets on this guy's shirt. I know they have a couple runs of this so my first thought was "this guy must've bulk ordered shirts". Then I remembered that some kinds of store-bought fake blood have a little bit of soap in them so they wash right out. The fake blood cleans the shirt! It's sort of Biblical.

There's a great electronic cricket sound coming from one of the light fixtures I think, it doesn't detract from the mood but does remind you that it's a beautiful summer night and you're spending it well.

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